



CITY COUNCIL

Public Works Committee

Monday, August 18 2008
Meeting Report

Attendance: M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Chair, S. Fuhs, D. Sterner

Others Attending: R. Hottenstein, L. Kelleher, C. Younger V. Spencer, K. Zeiber, D. Hoag

I. East Ends Contract

Mr. Spencer stated that East Ends is a private club situated in Mineral Spring Park. He stated that the East Ends Organizations leases the facility from the City. The first lease agreement ran from 1974 to 1979. The agreement was renegotiated and executed again in August of 1996 with an expiration date of July 31st 2001.

Mr. Spencer noted his many past requests that the Administration renegotiate this lease over the past six years. He also noted the prior claims of discriminatory practices used by East Ends when considering new membership applications. He cited an example provided by former Councilman Casey Ganster.

Mr. Spencer stated that the lease expiring in 2001, offers a five year renewal option that can be executed if the lessee gives the City at least 180 days written notice prior to the expiration of the lease. He inquired if East Ends exercised its option to take a five year extension. Mr. Younger stated that to his knowledge East Ends has not exercised this option. Ms. Kelleher stated that the only documents on file are the lease agreements from the 1970's and the lease agreement running from 1996 through 2001.

The committee inquired if East Ends is making its lease payment of \$500 per month.

Mr. Zeiber stated that Public Works replaced the building boiler two years ago and billed East Ends for parts and labor relative to the installations.

Mr. Hottenstein noted the City's ability to put out an RFP for the reuse of the building.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that East Ends has been a good tenant; however, she urged the Administration to check the Organization's membership practices.

Mr. Sterner stated that the lease agreement requires East Ends to pay real estate taxes. He inquired if tax payments are made.

Ms. Kelleher was asked to research the history of the building, payment records, find the buildings assessment, and discover when ownership began. This issue was referred to the September Public Works Committee meeting.

II. Public Arts Task Force

Mr. Hottenstein called the committee's attention to a memorandum issued by Mayor McMahon on August 12th. The memorandum recaps the program run by the Fine Arts Board created in 1977 by the Reading Redevelopment Authority. The Fine Arts Board operated for 31 years and was disbanded at the end of March 2008, through action of the Reading Redevelopment Authority. The memorandum speaks of the need for public art to enhance a cultural environment providing attraction and enhance property values and announces the Mayor's creation of a City Arts Task Force who will carry on the tradition of Public Art in Reading.

Mr. Fuhs questioned the suggested composition noting that some members are not City residents. He also noted the lack of diversity in the suggested membership list. He suggested the Mayor reconsider the reconfiguration of the board membership.

Mr. Fuhs also questioned how much money remained in the Public Art fund when the taskforce was disbanded by the Reading Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Spencer stated that in the past 1% of building projects total cost was dedicated to public art.

Mr. Fuhs also questioned if the Redevelopment Authority, Council or the Mayor will be overseeing the efforts of the taskforce. He questioned dedicating money to public art when groups like Blighted Property Review Committee are trying to find funding to address the City's many blighted properties.

III. Updates

Penn Vest Funding Application

Ms. Hoag noted the Administration's intent to seek multiyear Penn Vest Funding for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Application cannot be made until the design, currently being completed by Black and Veatch, is further along and cost estimates are available.

IV. Storm Water Management Ordinance

Ms. Hoag stated that the map will be forwarded to the City Clerk's Office by Wednesday for attachment to the Ordinance.

V. Storm Water Utility Fee

Mr. Hoag stated that staff is currently working on an RFP dealing with the collections system. Only one bidder responded to the most recent RFP. She also described the plan to educate the public through BCTV programs and a brochure.

VI. Bernhart's Dam

Ms. Hoag stated that the DEP is still insisting that the lake be drained which will permit inspection of the dam breast. The DEP has asked the City to submit a schedule. The committee expressed concern with draining the lake as the drainage will increase the public's access to highly contaminated areas of the park. Ms. Kelleher noted a recent article in the Reading Eagle announcing Exide and the EPA's intent to begin remediating residential properties. Ms. Kelleher was asked to contact the City's legal counsel to find out if any forward movement occurred in the remediation of the park. Ms. Hoag stated that the City has received a letter from the EPA stating that it is safe for the City to perform maintenance work at the park. The letter notes the use of a model based on an average adult and 90 day exposure. The committee again expressed concern about the dangers of draining the lake and creating an attractive nuisance at this lead contaminated park.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kelleher, City Clerk